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AUTHOR Mowrey, Corma A.
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ABSTRACT

The director of the NEA Organization Relations Division provides guidelines to assist school boards in establishing professional salaries and fringe benefits. The NEA supports the idea that teachers' salaries should compare favorably with those of other professions and occupations that require comparable preparation and experience. Five teacher needs should be satisfied by fringe benefits: (1) financial security, (2) health and recreation, (3) service-connected liabilities, (4) service-connected personal needs, and (5) professional growth. Some of the most important benefits are listed. (Author/MLF)

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Corma A. Mowrey, Director
Organization Relations Division
National Education Association
Washington, D. C.

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TEACHER SALARIES AND FRINGE BENEFITS

The National Education Association commends those state and local legislative bodies and boards of education that have recognized the importance of higher teacher salaries as a means of promoting improved competence and performance in teaching. Greater efforts must be made continuously to increase teachers' salaries to levels which will retain competent teachers in the school and attract persons of outstanding ability to the profession. School board members are well aware of the difficulties faced in securing and retaining an adequate supply of teachers in the schools. School boards determine the policies and we believe that there are some guidelines which provide assistance in establishing salaries and other welfare measures often referred to as fringe benefits.

Professional Salaries

The National Education Association believes that certain factors must be considered in the formula of any salary policy and that no professional group may be overlooked in the establishment of such policies. These factors also apply to salaries for professional service including but not limited to summer school, after-school activities, federally supported programs, research and writing activities, and extra duties within the school day.

The Association believes that a salary schedule should--

a. Be based upon preparation, teaching experience, and professional growth.

b. Be expressed through index or percentage guides.

c. Provide a beginning salary to attract capable young people into the profession.

d. Provide annual increments that in no case are less than 7 percent of the bachelor's degree minimum and are sufficient cumulatively to double this minimum within 7 years for professionally qualified teachers with the master's degree, with further salary increases for additional preparation and experience, including the doctor's degree.

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e. Be developed through the process of professional negotiation.

f. Permit no discrimination as to grade or subject taught, residence, creed, race, sex, marital status, or number of dependents.

g. Relate salary scales for supervisory and administrative positions to the teacher salary schedule by ratios which recognize differences in responsibility, length of contract year, and other appropriate factors.

h. Be revised by methods that prevent deterioration in the ratios of maximum salaries, experience increments, and preparational differentials to beginning salaries.

i. Be applied in actual practice in an equitable manner so that teachers are not penalized in changing assignments.

j. Allow full credit for teaching experiences outside the district.

We believe that starting salaries for qualified degree teachers should begin at $10,500 for the Bachelor's Degree and range to at least $21,000 in seven years with a Master's Degree and continue to increase for career teachers of advance qualifications.

It is generally understood that for many school systems these goals are unattainable at the present time. However, since beginning salaries of $8,000 or above have been adopted by a few systems for the school year 1969-70, it is not beyond the realm of possibility that these will be realistic goals in the near future.

We believe that teachers' salaries should compare favorably with earnings of other professions and occupations requiring comparable preparation and experience. This goal has not been achieved, as evidenced by the fact that for 1969-70 the average starting salary for beginning teachers with a bachelor's degree is $6,383, compared with $8,860 for engineering graduates with bachelor's degrees, $9,276 for chemistry graduates, $9,348 for physics majors, and $9,396 for accounting graduates.

The average starting salary in 1969-70 for teachers with a master's degree is $7,058. This compares unfavorably with average starting salaries of graduates with master's degrees who enter private industry. For example, men graduates with master's degrees in engineering are receiving $11,340 on the average, and those with a master's degree in accounting $11,232.

The National Education Association believes that to attract and retain competent staff, school systems must provide fringe benefits comparable to those of other professions and occupations requiring similar preparation and responsibility. Although the organized teaching profession pioneered in achieving many staff benefits, most public and private employers now provide far more attractive fringe benefit programs than do many school districts.

Fringe benefits are defined as nonsalary compensation provided by the employer to the employee in return for his services, usually in the form of insurance programs, leaves of absence, and services provided at the employer's expense. They are provided to meet needs which are shared by the employees as a group, and which may be met with greater economic advantage to both employee and employer under group programs than by individual expenditures from the employee's salary.

These benefits have become increasingly recognized in recent years not only as an integral aspect of employee compensation and an important cost element in both public and private employment, but as a significant means of recruiting and retaining capable personnel. Seven years ago a study of 1,120 firms by the U. S. Chamber of Commerce indicated that average payments of fringe benefits expressed as a percentage of salary totaled 25.6 percent.

Although teaching has been lagging behind other fields of employment in the provision of employee benefits, school districts have begun emphasizing these benefits in their recruitment programs. Moreover, growing numbers of teacher salary and welfare committees are directing their efforts toward the inclusion of various fringe benefits in the total compensation package being negotiated with boards of education. Employers have found that fringe benefits affect the health, morale, competence and effectiveness of their employees.

To assist teacher groups in negotiating for fringe benefits, the NEA in cooperation with state and local education associations has developed a booklet entitled Guidelines to Fringe Benefits for Members of the Teaching Profession. This booklet advises teacher organizations on procedures for studying and evaluating their fringe benefit package and for negotiating improvements. It also outlines 32 fringe benefits which are recommended for teachers and describes a desirable level of coverage to provide for each benefit.

The fringe benefit package recommended is a comprehensive one, designed to cover all major needs shared by teachers as a group. The Guidelines distinguish five areas of teacher needs to be met by fringe benefits:

(1) Financial security--benefits which protect the teacher against loss of income and protect the security of his dependents in the event of his death.

(2) Health and recreation--benefits which provide for medical treatment and services, and which provide free time for recreation.

(3) Service-connected liabilities--benefits which protect the teacher against expenses or loss incurred through the performance of his duties.

(4) Service-connected personal needs--benefits which offer conveniences to the teacher in meeting needs which arise in connection with the performance of his duties.

(5) Professional growth--benefits which provide opportunities for professional growth and participation in activities of professional significance.

Some of the most important benefits include:

- o a minimum of 10 days paid sick leave per year; preferably 20 days.
- o paid personal leave which the teacher may use entirely at his own discretion.
- o extended leaves of absence granted for such reasons as personal health, family illness, maternity, military service, or election to public office.
- o adequate retirement benefits provided through the state-wide retirement plan for teachers.
- o employer financed group life insurance in an amount equal to at least one year's salary.
- o employer-financed group health insurance, including major medical insurance for employees and their dependents.
- o employer-financed professional liability insurance to protect the teacher against damage claims arising from the performance of his duties.
- o in-service training programs.
- o paid professional leave.
- o paid sabbatical leave.

The Guidelines also stress the importance of equitable and efficient administration of fringe benefit programs, including the provision of payroll deductions for employee contributions to cost-shared benefits, association dues, credit union payments, and other items mutually agreed upon.

Nothing that I have said about fringe benefits is intended to minimize the importance of adquate professional salaries. The vast majority of an employee's personal needs are matters which he can and should handle at his own discretion and finance from his own salary. To meet these needs, improved teacher salaries are essential. Many voices in government, business, and industry are joining with the profession in proclaiming the need for higher salaries.

There is also need for a balanced perspective. Given certain amounts of funds for increases in staff compensation, local factors will determine where they might best be placed. Any order of priority must be subjective. The immediate improvement of staff salaries as shown by valid research is the primary need in a majority of school systems. In others, it may be desirable to emphasize other areas of staff welfare. Needs of personnel vary from district to district, and from state to state. What may be most important in one school system may be less important in another; what may be easily available and perhaps unique in one, may be out of the question in another. It may be relatively simple for one system to arrange for a particular benefit with negligible cost or inconvenience, while the benefit could be of major importance to the staff.

These are some reasonable goals to be achieved in teachers' salaries and fringe benefits, and they can best be achieved through the cooperative efforts of boards of education, administrators, and teachers. Despite the many controversies and conflicts erupting on the local, state, and national fronts, we must keep in mind the primary goal which all of us share and for which we all have some responsibility: the provision of quality and appropriate education for all young people.

I believe we have set forth some reasonable goals for both salaries and fringe benefits. How may boards determine policies on the issues involved is a basic, important question.

The following resolution of the American Association of School Administrators perhaps provides an answer. "We urge all school systems to establish written negotiation agreements which are developed cooperatively by the school board, the administration, and the teaching staff. Such agreements should state clearly the functions and prerogatives of the board, the administration, and the teachers. A grievance procedure listing definite steps for lodging appeals should be included in an agreement.

"All segments of the education profession should be working toward the same goal--the provision of high-quality education. Each of these groups sets different priorities on the various means of attaining this goal. Periodic disagreement and mutual adjustment of priorities can be expected and can help keep educators open minded and alert to new approaches to educational excellence. When disagreement produces suspicion, hostility, and recrimination, however, the resulting negative attitudes lower the quality of education.

Many unnecessary and injurious disagreements between school boards and their employees or administrators and other professional staff members can be avoided or minimized by the establishment of an explicit, mutually satisfactory, written negotiation agreement. We urge all administrators to support the establishment of such agreements between school boards and employee organizations."

We believe in the right of professional associations, through democratically selected representatives using professional channels, to participate with boards of education in the formulation of policies of common concern including salary and other conditions of professional service. We believe that procedures should be established which provide for an orderly method of reaching mutually satisfactory agreements and that these procedures should include provisions for appeal through designated educational channels when agreement cannot be reached.

The NEA recommends several procedures to be used in resolution of impasse. They are mediation, fact-finding, arbitration, political action and sanctions. The NEA believes that these procedures should make the strike unnecessary and recommends that every effort be made to avoid the strike as a procedure for the resolution of impasse. The Association realizes that sometimes teachers may have no choice but to withdraw services as the only means of attracting public attention to and correcting conditions in situations (a) where conditions make it impossible for teachers to provide quality education, (b) where solutions have been proposed but not consummated.

Quoting again from the 1970 AASA Resolutions:

Because of the crucial role played by the school board, as representative of the community, in determining the policies that govern the schools, we urge that machinery be established to provide the community with information on the authority and responsibility of the school board, provide new board members with orientation and maintain communication between the board and administrators, as leaders and representatives of the community, to invite, welcome and consider the interest, questions and suggestions of the faculty, students and public.

In working to provide quality education, to have well qualified teachers, good salaries, equitable fringe benefits, relevant curricula, adequate funds with which to maintain an educational system to meet the needs of the 70's, let all of us be aware that it will require cooperative efforts of the total educational team: boards of education, administrators, teachers, parents, students and the citizenry at large. Never was the need greater for maximum utilization of the interest, knowledge, skill and competences which are available.

We in the profession know it is not an easy task. Even though there are times when you as board members may entertain some doubts, let me re-assure you that the great majority of administrators and teachers in this country count ourselves as members of the team working with you. The task, the goal, the cause of education must prevail.

It occurs to me that the more than 100,000 board members in this country plus the more than 2 million teachers and administrators constitute a force and strength that can maintain and extend education as the greatest constructive force available to people for the solution of social, economical and political problems.

It further occurs to me that we have not yet demonstrated the cooperative strength to which I have referred.